

**A**ny person who believes that he or she has suffered unlawful discrimination, as defined, in the District of Columbia may file a complaint against an organization or person with the Office of Human Rights within 365 days of the occurrence or discovery of the action viewed as discriminatory, unless they are employees of the District of Columbia government. If persons are District government employees, the persons must first consult an agency Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act prior to filing with the Office, unless the District Government employee is alleging unlawful discrimination based on sexual harassment.

## Filing a Complaint

Persons filing a complaint do not have to be residents of the District of Columbia and may do so regardless of their immigration status; however, the alleged discrimination must have taken place within the District. The Office's pre-complaint questionnaires are available in English, Spanish, traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Amharic, Braille, large print, by mail, facsimile, or electronically on the Office's website. Where appropriate, referrals to other District government agencies or social service organizations may be made.

The Office of Human Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) have reached a Worksharing Agreement, which divides up their common workload of charges in order to avoid duplication of charge processing. Each charge of discrimination that is covered by both an EEOC-enforced statute and the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, is dual-filed under both laws. These dual-filed charges are typically investigated by only one agency, which allows avoidance of two investigations of the same matter, but the legal rights of the charging parties are still preserved under both laws.

## Complaint Resolutions

	2001	2002	2003
Number of Cases Docketed	185	327	566
Number of Complaints Resolved	243	288	513
Monetary Value of Case Settlements	\$855,902	\$1,635,970	\$988,332

**For more information, please contact:**

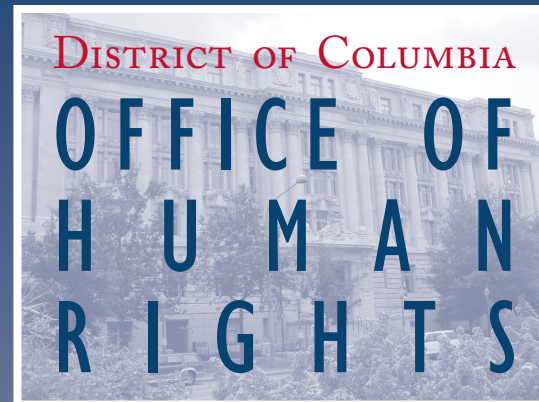
**DC Office of Human Rights**  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Suite 570N  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Phone: (202) 727-4559  
Fax: (202) 727-9589  
[www.ohr.dc.gov](http://www.ohr.dc.gov)

**DC Office of Human Rights Fair Housing Program**  
3220 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., First Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20020  
Phone: (202) 727-4559 or (202) 727-1145  
Fax: (202) 645-6390



**District of Columbia Office of Human Rights**

Anthony A. Williams, Mayor



"Every individual shall have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the economic, cultural, and intellectual life of the District and to have an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of life..."

—DCHRA §2-1402.01



**District of Columbia Office of Human Rights**

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## Our Mission

The District of Columbia Office of Human Rights is the advocate for the practice of good human relations and mutual understanding among the diverse groups in the District. Its purpose is to secure an end to unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and educational institutions in the District of Columbia by way of mediation, investigation, conciliation, prosecution and addressing illegal discriminatory practices within the District. To accomplish its mission, the Office enforces the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, as well as other local and federal laws and policies on nondiscrimination, such as the D.C. Family and Medical Leave Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

### “Unlawful Discrimination”

Defined: The Office of Human Rights is charged with eradicating discrimination, as defined by local and federal statutes, on the basis of a person's actual or perceived race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, \*familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, disability, \*source of income, and \*place of residence or business. In accordance with the local and federal statutes, the Office also protects persons who have been victims of unlawful retaliation due to participation in protected Title VII-based activities.

\*Pursuant to the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, the “familial status” and “source of income” bases are applicable only when alleging discrimination in housing, public accommodations and educational institutions. The basis of “place of residence or business” is applicable only if alleging discrimination in housing and public accommodations.

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There are seven primary organizational functions of the Office of Human Rights:

## Our Organization

- 1 **The Office of the Director**, which sets overall policy and performance targets for the Office, and promotes conciliation after a determination of probable cause has been reached;
- 2 **Compliance, Education and Outreach**, which educates District residents, employers, community groups, and other concerned parties about the Human Rights Act and federal anti-discrimination laws in order to prevent unlawful discrimination;
- 3 **Intake**, which counsels prospective complainants on the Office's functions and statutory responsibilities, evaluates the complainants' allegations of unlawful discrimination, and completes the forms and procedures necessary for the filing of the complaint;
- 4 **Mediation**, which trains and oversees the activities of mediators who assist the parties named in the complaint to reach a voluntary settlement\*;
- 5 **Investigations**, which solicit and evaluate evidence provided by the complainant and respondent;
- 6 **Legal**, which prepares a written determination about whether or not there is probable cause to believe that the respondent has violated the Human Rights Act, as well as other federal anti-discrimination laws; responds to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests from the public; interprets and creates policies and procedures for the Office and District; conducts in-house training to staff, Commission attorneys and interns; and assists in lawsuit representation;
- 7 **Fair Housing**, which investigates fair housing discrimination complaints, conducts community education and outreach, and provides fair housing training.

*\*The D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, established mandatory mediation, effective October 1, 1997. Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process that is used by the Office as an alternative to investigation. Complaints that are not resolved in mediation are forwarded to case investigations, as mandated under the Act.”*

**The Commission on Human Rights:** The District of Columbia Commission on Human Rights adjudicates private sector complaints that have been found to have probable cause and have been certified by the Office of Human Rights. An administrative, trial-type hearing is conducted either before a hearing examiner or a panel of commissioners. Upon a finding of discrimination, the Commission may issue injunctive relief and award damages including front and back pay, compensatory damages, civil penalties, and attorney's fees. Appeals of all Commission decisions may be brought before the D.C. Court of Appeals.

**The Fair Housing Program:** The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) authorized the Office of Human Rights as a substantially equivalent agency for processing fair housing complaints following the completion of all program requirements. In 2000, the Office was awarded a capacity building grant to develop a fair housing program. The Office's Fair Housing Program is located in Southeast Washington D.C. in the Penn-Branch Municipal Services Center. Aside from conducting investigations, community education and outreach, the Fair Housing Program coordinates a Fair Housing Symposium each April during Fair Housing Month providing an opportunity and forum for the community, advocates and other professionals to address fair housing issues in the District.

**Language Access Program:** In April 2004, the District of Columbia government passed the Language Access Act of 2003 to “provide greater access and participation in public services, programs and activities for residents of the District of Columbia with limited or no-English proficiency” by requiring that District government agencies assess the need for and offer language services, as well as provide written translation of documents into any non-English language spoken by a limited or no-English proficient population that constitutes 3% or 500 individuals, whichever is less, of the population served or encountered. The Office of Human Rights and Language Access Director oversee, coordinate and supervise District government programs, services and departments in compliance with the Act.